



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Illinois Department of Public Health Expands COVID-19 Testing to Elementary Schools

Testing currently available for middle schools, high schools, and community colleges

SPRINGFIELD – To help ensure schools can more safely resume in-person learning, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) today announced it is expanding access to no-cost and low-cost COVID-19 testing to elementary schools across Illinois. Schools can choose to utilize the saliva-based covidSHIELD test developed by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). The covidSHIELD test can quickly detect the virus that causes COVID-19, and its variants, including among people who do not have symptoms.

“As we move ever closer to returning to how we lived pre-pandemic, it is critically important that we identify cases of COVID-19 as quickly as possible to help prevent outbreaks, which could ultimately lead to new surges,” said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. “Offering testing in schools, along with vaccination and masking, can help protect students, staff, and teachers when in-person learning resumes.”

Schools and IDPH will receive test results within 24 hours of specimens reaching a SHIELD Illinois lab.

Testing is free for schools in districts that are predominantly low-income and have experienced high rates of COVID-19 infection. Other schools will receive a discounted fee of \$10 per test. The classification of low-income school districts is determined by the Illinois State Board of Education’s [evidence-based funding criteria](#).

Last month, IDPH expanded covidSHIELD testing to middle and high schools across Illinois outside the city of Chicago.

IDPH is utilizing federal funds from the CARES Act and American Rescue Plan to offer the rapid results testing. The effort is part of the \$225 million agreement between the University of Illinois System and the state aimed at proactively identifying asymptomatic individuals to prevent spread of COVID-19.

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“I am pleased to see the protective screen that our covidSHIELD test-and-trace system provides being extended now to elementary schools around Illinois. I am deeply thankful to the Illinois Department of Public Health for its vision in making this safe, effective and efficient system available to so many students and teachers,” University of Illinois System President Tim Killeen said. “Providing this kind of service to the state is at the heart of our land-grant mission.”

Schools looking for more information on testing or to sign up for covidSHIELD testing can contact Beth Heller at bheller@uillinois.edu.

(For your use is [a video](#) showing two ways that schools are collecting saliva samples and a [still photo](#).)

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